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NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Forests and Range

FIRE AWARENESS ESSENTIAL AS HOT WEATHER ARRIVES

VICTORIA – The hot, dry weather forecast for the next 10 days means southern sections of British Columbia will be experiencing near or record-breaking temperatures, cautioned Forests and Range Minister Richard Coleman today.

"I'm asking all British Columbians to help reduce preventable fires as the weather heats up," said Coleman. "By being careful in and around our forests you can help protect our province."

The recent weather development signifies the start of a significant drying trend for the majority of the province. With temperatures rising to high levels and fire danger ratings increasing each day, the public is reminded to use extreme caution when in forested areas and to check for current information regarding campfire bans and restrictions that may be in place.

People cause about half of all wildfires in the province each year, with many resulting from escaped backyard or grass burns or abandoned campfires. So far this year, more than 1,200 wildfires have burnt over 105,000 hectares. The biggest contribution people can make is to prevent all unwanted fires in the first place, and also to report fires as soon as they see them.

There are open fire burning restrictions in effect in the Kamloops, Coastal, and Southeast regions. The Cariboo Fire Centre has also implemented a ban on backyard and industrial burning.

"Although weather is the biggest factor in determining the kind of fire season we experience, the public also has a huge impact," said Coleman. He went on to say that, given the constant potential for lightning this time of year and the difficulty predicting where lightning may strike, the Forest Service needs everyone's help. "When people prevent unnecessary fires from starting, we can save our firefighting resources for fires caused by lightning."

For the latest information on current wildfire activity or open fire restrictions, visit the provincial government website at www.for.gov.bc.ca/protect.

To report a wildfire, call 1-800-663-5555, or *5555 on most cellular networks.

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Media contact: Max Cleeveley
Communications Director
Ministry of Forests and Range
250 387-8486

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